THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

COMMON GROUND

PRESERVING OUR NATION'S HERITAGE SUMMER 2010

CELEBRATING A DECADE **HALS** Historic American Landscapes Survey

FIRST WORD

BY PAUL DOLINSKY

The Intimate and the Epic

BRIARWOOD, A LOUISIANA PRESERVE ESTABLISHED by the late conservationist Caroline Dormon, is a landscape with a very pronounced tie to humanity. Her love is literally written in woods where she created a safe haven for endangered species (see page 30). I was strolling the grounds in the early days of the Historic American Landscapes Survey—a then-new NPS program intended to document such places—thinking how Briarwood fit into the grand breadth of the American story. My guide—Jessie Johnson, an elderly woman who had worked with Caroline—suddenly bent down and exclaimed, "Oh my God, it's blooming." Here I was, musing on landscapes with a capital "L," and she had taken the idea down to a flower as tiny as a pinhead—a species that had not bloomed in ages. The moment was a lesson in perspective, speaking of the intimate connections we have with our lands. AMONG PRESERVATIONISTS, THAT CONNECTION has been growing since the late 1970s, when a sea change took place in how we look at historic places. The context in which they exist, the landscape, emerged as a dynamic new concept, as national parks examined themselves anew and the National Trust launched its Main Street program—focused on rejuvenating entire communities, not just individual structures. IN THE MIDST OF THIS CHANGE, the National Park Service stepped forward to take the lead. It was a time of great ferment as the traditional tools of historical survey—measured drawings, large format photography, written histories—were applied to a spectrum of sites, from heavily designed landscapes to vernacular landscapes with little or no design pretensions. Two pilot projects—at Washington DC's Meridian Hill Park, a sterling example of early 20th-century Neoclassical design, and Dumbarton Oaks Park, a naturalistic design of stream, woodland, and meadow—revealed new dimensions in places we thought we already knew. VIRGINIA'S STRATFORD HALL–the Lee Family ancestral home—can be used to illustrate the approach. The old way saw an artifact on a platter, a lovingly restored piece of Georgian architecture to be studied under a magnifying glass. The new way saw how, far from a discreet entity, the house was a product of the vast agricultural operation surrounding it, created by rum and slavery. Early efforts employing the perspective resonated with the preservation community, and HALS was established in 2000. THE SURVEY'S FIRST PROJECT WAS at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, in the rolling hills of Vermont. George Perkins Marsh, author of *Man and Nature* and one of America's first conservationists, lived here as a child; Frederick Billings, president of Northern Pacific Railway, purchased the home and followed the teachings of Marsh in farming and reforestation. An experiment itself, the place was ideally suited to the new approach. The spectacular view from the fanciful Victorian porch—of a mountain, of farm fields, of the town below—illustrates the very idea of a cultural landscape, the union of land, architectural environment, and societal forces. HALS surveys are invaluable to preserving and understanding such places. And today, technology not available to earlier generations of landscape architects—such as laser scanning—enhances both speed and accuracy. HALS HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE for ten years, turning its lens on the national narrative as told through our lands, but there is still much to do. A network has been established with the American Society of Landscape Architects, with liaisons across the United States inventorying sites to be documented, realizing the vision of HALS as independent from its partners the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record. A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE IS A PLACE IN CONTINUOUS CHANGE, and documentation puts it in that context. Philadelphia's The Woodlands—a Victorian graveyard overlooking the Schuylkill River, with the city skyline in the distance—was once the estate of William Hamilton, one of the wealthiest people in the early days of the Republic. How did a gentleman's estate, its Classical mansion one of the first with a formal portico, become a Victorian relic? HALS documentation looks to answer that question, placing the site in the context of today. THE INTENT IS TO SHOW HOW PEOPLE SHAPE PLACES and are in turn shaped by them. Ranchers eking out a life on the north rim of the Grand Canyon, who saw in that stark landscape their own vision of Manifest Destiny (see page 18). Ancient Hawaiians constructing Hale O Pi'ilani Heiau, a massive ceremonial platform bridging volcanic flows on the east coast of Maui. Hopi Indians chipping and scratching clan symbols on the rock faces at Tutuveni—their Rosetta Stone. HALS DOCUMENTATION IS AT THE CONFLUENCE OF the historical and the natural, the cultural and the scientific. It captures our humanity while portraying the broad sweep of the American landscape, revealing its power, its importance, its ability to contain both the intimate and the epic.

HALS DOCUMENTATION IS AT THE CONFLUENCE OF THE HISTORICAL AND THE NATURAL, THE CULTURAL AND THE SCIENTIFIC. IT CAPTURES OUR HUMANITY WHILE PORTRAYING THE BROAD SWEEP OF THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE.

CLARA BARTON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE/ CAROL M. HIGHSMITH FOR THE NPS MUSEUM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Paul Dolinsky is Chief, Historic American Landscapes Survey, National Park Service

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Above: Settee, a gift to Clara Barton for her relief work in the Franco-Prussia War from the Grand Duchess Louise of Baden Germany. *Front and back:* Pine Ranch, Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, documented by the Historic American Landscapes Survey.

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NEWS NOW

Showtime at the Apollo

Legendary African American Venue Stars in Report and Exhibit

"Have you got the feeling?" James Brown, the Godfather of Soul, implored his audience at the Apollo one spring night in 1968. And with his feet twirling and hips shaking, he soon had the crowd twirling and shaking too. It was just one wild night of many at the theater, with its roster of stars such as Sarah Vaughan, Luther Vandross, Dionne Warwick, and the Jackson Five, who all saw their careers kickstarted by the legendary venue.

Few institutions are as storied as the Apollo—celebrating its 75th anniversary this year with *Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing: How the Apollo Theater Shaped American Entertainment,* an exhibition developed by the staff of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, slated to open in 2015. So it's appropriate that the theater, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, has also earned a nod in the recent *African American National Historic Landmark Assessment Study,* a congressionally mandated NPS report that details a host of sites potentially worthy of NHL status. "The theater certainly has had enough of an impact," says Cordell Reaves, historic preservation analyst for the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, which put forth the Apollo in the study.

The exhibit, co-produced with the nonprofit Apollo Theater Foundation, showcases around 100 artifacts, many on display for the first time. "For a lot of the legends the exhibit features, back in the '40s and the '50s, there weren't museums interested in collecting their items," says curator Tuliza Fleming, who scoured the country looking for objects that once graced the stage.

Built in 1913, the neoclassical hall opened as a burlesque house called Hurtig and Seamon's New (Burlesque) Theater. Harlem at the time was an affluent suburb for wealthy white New Yorkers; black patrons weren't even allowed in the door. In 1904, however, the overbuilding of luxury apartments—coupled with an economic downturn—led to a great wave of African American migrants, who re-populated the area around 125th Street in north Manhattan. By the 1930s, the demographics had changed almost completely, and the Harlem Renaissance was in full swing.

The hall, renamed the 125th Street Apollo Theater by new owner Sidney Cohen and manager Morris Sussman, became a playhouse

APOLLO'S AUDIENCE WAS RENOWNED FOR ITS ABILITY TO CATAPULT ENTERTAINERS TO STARDOM, ALERT THEM TO THE INADEQUACIES OF THEIR ART, OR DOOM THEM TO THE REALM OF OBSCURITY. —CURATOR TULIZA FLEMING

NEAR RIGHT: ***Chaka Khan rocks the house in the 1970s, from the Apollo exhibit "Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing."*** FAR RIGHT: ***The iconic marquee.***

contact points ***web*** *African American National Historic Landmark Assessment Study www.nps.gov/history/nhl/Themes/Special%20Studies/AA%20NHL%20Assessment%20Study.pdf Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture http://nmaahc.si.edu/section/programs/view/43*

LEFT KWAME BRATHWAITE, RIGHT C. BAY MILIN/COURTESY OF SMITHSONIAN BOOKS

for African American variety acts. Most clubs still had a whites-only policy, so the Apollo was one of the few places for locals to go during the Depression, as it "eased life's burdens by providing its patrons with sidesplitting laughter, good music, acrobatic dancing, and theatrical entertainment, all for the price of 15 cents," writes Fleming in the exhibit's companion book, *Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing*. Bandleader Cab Calloway, regal in his white tux, was a perennial favorite, hair flailing as he punctuated notes with energetic thrusts of his baton.

THE APOLLO SET OR SHOWCASED ALL THE LATEST TRENDS IN MUSIC. DUKE ELLINGTON AND THE SWING BANDS. JAZZ AND BEBOP WITH DIZZY GILLESPIE AND THELONIOUS MONK. GIRL GROUPS SUCH AS THE SHIRELLES.

Under Cohen and Sussman's management, there were usually four to five shows a day, each preceded by films or newsreels, followed by revues featuring a variety of acts including plays, dancers, and comedians. But it was Amateur Hour, every Wednesday evening, that stole the spotlight. Broadcast live over the radio, it was the *American Idol* of its day, giving unknowns the chance to show if they had what it takes. "Apollo's audience was renowned for its ability to catapult entertainers to stardom, alert them to the inadequacies of their art, or doom them to the realm of obscurity," Fleming writes.

Frank Schiffman and Leo Brecher bought the building in 1935 and shortened its name to the Apollo, keeping much the same format, including Amateur Hour. Schiffman, a pugnacious businessman and meticulous notetaker with a sharp eye for talent, was the brains behind the theater's success over the next 40 years. Of actress and singer Pearl Bailey, he wrote after her show on October 22, 1965, "The absolute mistress of comedy-song. Had audience in her hands from start to finish. Excellent!!!" Of Buddy Holly's show with the Crickets on August 16, 1957, he noted "Four White boys. Very bad." And of the acts that failed to attract a large enough crowd to cover their fees, he marked "substantial loss." Not everyone appreciated his money-driven tactics, but no one denied that his entertainment savvy drove the Apollo's reputation as a star-making vehicle.

A teenaged Ella Fitzgerald planned on dancing one Amateur Night. "There I was, nervous as can be, only 15 years old with the skinniest legs you've ever seen—and I froze; got cold feet," she later recalled. "The man in charge said that I had better do something up there, so I said I wanted to sing instead." Her impromptu rendition of "The Object of My Affection" captivated the audience and the rest is history.

The Apollo set or showcased all the latest trends in music. Duke Ellington and the swing bands. Jazz and bebop with Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk. Girl groups such as the Shirelles. Well into the 1970s, the Apollo pulsed with the sounds of rock, soul, R&B, funk, and gospel. But times were changing. African American performers found themselves welcome at previously off-limits venues such as Radio City Music Hall, where the money was better. The city was in the throes of a recession, and Harlem's crime rate was on the rise. In January 1976, the Apollo was shuttered and, despite sporadic

BELOW COURTESY OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

BOTTOM LEFT CHUCK STEWART, KWAME BRATHWAITE/COURTESY OF THE APOLLO THEATER FOUNDATION AND SMITHSONIAN BOOKS, BOTTOM RIGHT LLOYD YEARWOOD/COURTESY OF SMITHSONIAN BOOKS

shows, remained so until Inner City Broadcasting company gave it a grand reopening in 1985.

Despite the comeback, the hall's heyday is now a memory. Still, it remains an icon. When James Brown died in 2006, the Apollo held a memorial service as thousands came to pay their final respects. The Apollo was again a scene of mourning when Michael Jackson died. And when presidential candidate Barack Obama appealed for votes from the city, he spoke from the Apollo stage.

restoration so that the legacy lives on, a legacy that Fleming stresses encompasses all of American entertainment. Indeed, stars of all stripes, from John Lennon and Barbra Striesand to Willie Nelson and Jennifer Lopez have been drawn to perform here. Fleming says they were welcome from the inception. "Latinos, Asians, African Americans—right from the very beginning, all were on its stage."

This fall, after its Smithsonian showing, the exhibit will visit Detroit and New York City under the aegis of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. Future articles in *Common Ground* will focus on other sites from the assessment study.

Today managed by the Apollo Theater Foundation, the hall still hosts Amateur Night every Wednesday evening, as well as concerts, community programs, and lectures. The top tourist site in Harlem—which has undergone a revitalization of its own in recent years—it attracts 1.3 million visitors each year. It is also undergoing a $96 million

TOP: ***Louis Armstrong and his trumpet jazzed audiences for decades.*** ABOVE LEFT: ***The Supremes' first performance at the Apollo, in 1962, with the Motortown Revues.*** ABOVE RIGHT: ***Sarah Vaughan on stage in 1964.***

TAX CREDIT

FEDERAL DOLLARS IN SUPPORT OF PRESERVATION

DUBUQUE STAR BREWERY Like many industrial buildings in old downtowns, the Dubuque Star Brewery was a fading reminder of grand designs. While unmistakably utilitarian, its Palladian windows and masonry flourishes echoed turn-of-the-century sensibilities. Since closing in 1999, it sat empty on the waterfront, its brewing days long over. Recently, the city stabilized the structure, and developers launched a $6.5 million rehab. Today, the brewery is key to a revitalized waterfront, with new wood windows, reconditioned brick walls, cast iron columns, and arched ceilings, the rooftop accommodating patios and dining areas. A second floor restaurant boasts a restored copper brewing kettle, with a winery on the first floor and office space on the third and fourth. Federal preservation tax credits, along with city, state, and private funds, made the project a reality.

EMPORIA GRANADA THEATRE Built in the grand style of its day, the Granada Theater of Emporia, Kansas, was the work of the Bowler Brothers, nationally known theater designers. The ornate Spanish Colonial Revival structure, erected in 1929, screened first-run films and hosted vaudeville acts and beauty pageants. But by the '60s, it was in decline, closing in 1982. A listing in the National Register of Historic Places was the first step in a comeback, culminating in a three-year, $2.6 million campaign launched by the Emporia Granada Theatre Alliance. Today, with the help of tax credits, it once again draws crowds, its decorative plaster and terra cotta fully restored. New terraces on the main floor allow for seating flexibility to accommodate not only movies, but concerts, conferences, wedding receptions, and dinner theater. Local arts and cultural groups have joined to make the Granada a force in revitalizing downtown Emporia.

to qualify for tax credits *The new use must be income producing, the structure certified as historic, and the renovation in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The credit can equal up to 20 percent of the project cost. The tax credit program is administered by the National Park Service with IRS.*

contact point ***web*** *www.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/index.htm*

A Beacon for Change >>

A massive Art Deco landmark overlooking the Hudson River, the former Jersey City Medical Center is undergoing an ambitious rehab, aided by National Park Service-administered preservation tax incentives. Known in its new incarnation as the Beacon, it will comprise two million square feet of residential and retail space, involving ten buildings and a $500 million budget, the largest project in the history of the federal preservation tax credit program. **It was fortunate the developer understood the importance** of the place, says historical architect and program reviewer Audrey Tepper. The complex is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, recognized as "an early example of a specialized architectural type, the metropolitan medical institution," according to the Register nomination. Built as a Works Progress Administration project during the Depression, the structure is an unparalleled specimen of the era's style. "The interiors are case studies in Art Deco," says Tepper. "They're phenomenal." Actor/director Robert Redford, in his film *Quiz Show,* used the interiors as a stand-in for Rockefeller Center in the 1950s. The exterior features, also notable, are being preserved as well.

Promotional material for the Beacon shows spacious, luxurious lofts in spaces once occupied by hospital beds, labs, and offices. The site is on a crest of the Hudson Palisades and the highest point in Jersey City, desirable when it was built because of the view and its distance from industrial development underway at the hospital's former location at Paulus Hook. The complex that dominates the skyline today was partially engineered by Jersey City Mayor Frank Hague, who was influential in electing President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The WPA money to fund the hospital was believed to be a return favor. **When the center was built, it included marble walls, chandeliers,** terrazzo floors, ornate molding, and etched glass. Its lobbies, hallways, and meeting rooms were extravagant, and Metrovest, the developer, is restoring much of the detail. As described in the *Saturday Evening Post,* the hospital appeared "like a beautiful mirage . . . rising up from the municipal rubble which is Jersey City." The structure was a point of pride for Hague. Providing

LEFT ALEX DI SUVERO, RIGHT SCOTT SHEPPARD

TAX
CREDIT

ALEX DI SUVERO

free care for those who could not afford it, the hospital was an instant monument, with its exterior a mix of pale yellow brick and carved limestone. The construction project was a godsend to residents at the height of the Depression. When finished, the hospital was the third-largest health care facility in the world, with almost 2,000 beds at its peak.

Yet the center was also criticized as too big and extravagant—expensive to staff and maintain—and for decades operated at a loss. A new hospital was built elsewhere in 2004, and the complex was shuttered, its future uncertain. Metrovest, working with the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency, undertook the daunting rehabilitation.

Now offered as an affordable alternative to living in Manhattan, the Beacon's retro appeal and views across the river are projected to quickly draw residents. Three of the buildings are done, named the Rialto, the Capital, and the Mercury after famous theaters of the 1930s.

Eclipsed in the orbit of the Big Apple, Jersey City has been overlooked for years, but the forces that saw this rehab have been at work across the country. Second tier cities close to more famous siblings are seeing remarkable growth, part of what *USA Today* calls "a demographic and

AS THE MEDICAL CENTER BEFORE IT, THE BEACON WILL SERVE AS A VISUAL LANDMARK, VISIBLE FROM THE NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE, FROM MANHATTAN, AND NEW YORK HARBOR. ITS SCULPTED EXTERIOR, A STANDOUT ON THE JERSEY CITY SKYLINE WITH ITS AUSTERE STAIR-STEP PROFILE, CONTRASTS STRIKINGLY WITH THE STREAMLINED GRANDEUR INSIDE, MARKING THE BEACON AS A TIMELESS WORK OF ART.

economic U-turn." Like Jersey City, many of these places have long been in decline, with old buildings—many of them large commercial structures—gone vacant with the exodus of residents. Today, they are being repurposed, which reduces sprawl. Industrial sites, strip malls, and parking lots have all become targets for redevelopment.

An easy commute to Manhattan, Jersey City is a third to half as expensive, drawing not only residents, but corporations as well. Transportation, utilities, and other elements of infrastructure are already in place, making projects like the Beacon possible.

As the medical center before it, the Beacon will serve as a landmark visible from the New Jersey Turnpike, Manhattan, and New York harbor. Its sculpted exterior, a standout on the Jersey City skyline with its austere stair-step profile, contrasts strikingly with the streamlined grandeur inside, marking the Beacon as a timeless work of art. Reincarnated as shops and condos, the updated Beacon will include an indoor pool, gym, theater, saunas and steam rooms, and numerous other amenities.

LEFT: ***Movie-screening space for residents of the Beacon, boasting magnificent details restored thanks to federal preservation tax credits.***

Nurturing a Nation

A Salute to Red Cross Founder Clara Barton

"It must grow. I want it to, it is my planting. I should rejoice the crop no matter who harvests it." The words were Clara Barton's. The "crop" was the American Red Cross—and grow it did. In the 129 years since Barton founded the organization, it has become the country's largest relief group with over 30,000 employees and more than half a million volunteers. From international emergencies like the Haiti earthquake, to the local neighborhood house fire, it assists recovery from around 70,000 disasters each year. Today, the administrative center for the agency is in downtown Washington, DC, but for those wanting to see where the place got its start, a trip eight miles out to Glen Echo, Maryland, is in order.

That's where the Clara Barton National Historic Site—early Red Cross headquarters—is located. When Barton was president, the organization only had a paid staff of two, along with all the heart and soul she could give it. "The Red Cross was her life's work," says historian Elizabeth Brown Pryor, author of *Clara Barton: Professional Angel,* who started researching in the mid-'70s when the place became the first National Park Service site to honor a woman. The Steamboat Gothic wood and stone structure, painted a cheery yellow, was not just an office. "It was the Red Cross warehouse and headquarters, but also where she lived and where she spent time with her friends and family," says Kimberly Robinson, the site's acting curator. Those who can't make the trip can visit online thanks to a new feature produced by the NPS Museum Management Program. Web viewers can see photographs of almost 300 of the site's 14,000 objects and historic images—sampled here—plus take a virtual tour of the house.

"MEDICINES, BANDAGING, SPLINTS, AND CRUTCHES . . . SPADES, HOES, RAKES," ONE OF BARTON'S NIECES RECALLED OF THE CLOSET CONTENTS. "SHE COULD HAVE LAUNCHED A ONE WOMAN RESCUE MISSION AT ANY MOMENT."

One of America's most accomplished figures, Barton helped institute public education in New Jersey, served as one of America's first federal women employees, campaigned for suffrage, braved Civil War battlefields to nurse the wounded, assisted war and disaster relief overseas, and worked to promote first aid. "If you add it all up, everyone's life today is better because of Clara Barton," Pryor says.

She lived in Glen Echo during the last 15 years of all that work. The nine-acre property was a gift from Edwin and Edward Baltzley, inventors of a spatterless egg beater that earned enough to purchase the 516-acre tract they named Glen Echo in 1890. The brothers then built a trolley to DC, turned the site into a cultural retreat, and, figuring a little bit of celebrity couldn't hurt, offered Clara Barton a house.

Speculated to have been built with boards from a disassembled Red Cross shelter used during the Johnstown Flood—on which the floor plan is based—the structure spent its first five years as a storage facility. Barton moved there from Washington in 1897. Those with never enough storage space might envy the ample closets everywhere, particularly along the first-floor hallway. "Medicines, bandaging, splints, and crutches . . . spades, hoes, rakes," one of Barton's nieces recalled of the closet contents. "She could have launched a one woman rescue mission at any moment."

ABOVE: ***Clara Barton in her late 70s.*** RIGHT: ***Psyche, Greek Goddess of the Soul, offering water to an eagle, a circa 1870 statue at the site.***

contact points ***web*** *NPS Online Exhibit and Teaching with Museum Collections Lesson Plan www.nps.gov/history/museum/exhibits/clba/index.html*
Clara Barton National Historic Site www.nps.gov/clba

ALL PHOTOS CLARA BARTON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE/ CAROL M. HIGHSMITH FOR THE NPS MUSEUM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM EXCEPT AS NOTED

The 38-room house was anything but a storage facility once Barton moved in. Besides being her home and Red Cross headquarters, it doubled as a place to live for volunteers who often stayed for extended periods in the several guest rooms. Barton often invited people to stay, even though she was the first to admit that it was "no plush Victorian showcase." Never much of a spender, her frugality is evident in the muslin-lined ceilings.

The house, restored to look as it did in the Barton years, boasts original objects such as a circa 1880 velvet upholstered armchair from Turkey and a circa 1870 statue of Psyche, the Greek Goddess of the Soul. Barton spent most of her time in her office, with staff busily bustling about in a connecting room. With a graphophone and a number of Remington, Underwood, and Oliver typewriters, the house was as efficient as any downtown office. Barton's cubbyhole desk is cluttered with papers, stamps, and writing materials—just as it was in her day—but it's the chair that says the most about the woman. Oral tradition has it that she had the back sawed off so no one could say she couldn't sit straight and work as well as a younger person. She had good reason to be suspicious that people would try, having suffered from discrimination all of her life.

LOUISE T. TAFT FOR HABS

THE HOUSE AT GLEN ECHO WOULD FOREVER KEEP THE RED STAINED-GLASS CROSSES THAT BECKON FROM THE UPPER-STORY WINDOWS, THE SWISS INSIGNIA OF NEUTRALITY LETTING VISITORS KNOW THEY ARE WELCOME.

Born Clarissa Harlowe Barton on Christmas Day 1821 in North Oxford, Massachusetts, she was a smart and inquisitive child, and started teaching at the age of 16. She taught for several years in Massachusetts, before moving to Bordentown, New Jersey. When she realized the state did not have free public schools, she started her own and by the end of the first year had 600 students. Residents were so pleased they built a larger one, hiring a man to run it at twice Barton's salary.

Not wanting to be an assistant at the school she founded, she left for Washington, in 1854 becoming one of the first federal women workers—a recording clerk for the U.S. Patent Office—earning the same as a man. That is, until she was demoted to copyist and laid off because the Secretary of the Interior did not approve of women employees.

With Lincoln's presidency her copyist job returned, and she found her calling. In April 1861, with injured and weary soldiers arriving in Washington, Barton learned the Army had nothing to give them. She was soon visiting field hospitals and battlefields far and wide—and though a Union supporter herself—caring for soldiers on both sides of the conflict. She provided medicine, food, and clothing—it was a dangerous job, with a bullet once flying through her sleeve—earning her the nickname "angel of the battlefield." Her Civil War work did not end with the surrender at Appomattox. She led the search for the thousands who never returned home, establishing the Office of Correspondence with Friends of the Missing Men. The four-year project, which garnered more than 63,000 requests, got 22,000 off the missing lists. Barton was instrumental in identifying nearly 13,000 unmarked graves at Andersonville National Cemetery; a note featured in the exhibit names one of the soldiers.

With money always a struggle, she supported herself by lecturing about her war experiences, using the podium to speak out about women's rights. Friends with leaders of the suffragist movement, she wanted the right to vote. But what she really wanted was for women to be able to earn an income. "She knew that the vote itself wouldn't earn women their freedom," Pryor says. Ironically, it was her work on the battlefield that did more in this regard. Before the Civil War, nursing was a men-only profession; women like Barton literally changed the face of the job.

In 1869, she sailed to Europe where she met Dr. Louis Appia, a founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross, an organization that essentially did what she had done on the battlefields. The committee was working on the Treaty of Geneva, an international agreement that in war all injured would receive treatment no matter their allegiance, and that medical personnel would be considered neutral. Thirty-two countries had signed; America had not. When the Franco-Prussian War broke out, Barton saw the group's

LEFT: *Turkish velvet armchair, a gift from the Ottoman Empire for Barton's relief efforts during the Turkish-Armenian conflict of the 1890s.* ABOVE: *The Red Cross Room on the third floor of the Barton house. At night, she often put a lamp behind the stained glass to light up the red crosses.*

strength and lent her support. A volunteer on the front lines, she earned a number of medals and pins seen in the web feature and in several photographs—Barton loved wearing them to add touches of color to her otherwise somber outfits.

Health problems sent her back to the states, where in 1877 after rest she turned to starting a Red Cross branch—a lofty goal, since the government wanted to avoid alliances and didn't think the Red Cross was needed. But Barton was shrewd and after five years of campaigning, strategizing, and frustration, she succeeded. In 1882, the Senate unanimously ratified the treaty. "It was an enormous thing," Pryor says. "We didn't sign treaties and the fact that she was able to change that was a huge achievement." The American Red Cross followed.

The following 20 years were some of the busiest Barton ever knew. Very hands-on as president, she visited 18 disaster sites, usually with chief field agent Dr. Julian Hubbell, her trusted friend and partner. Barton's tenure ended on a sour note, however. Some in the organization raised charges that she was unfit and used donations for herself. While Barton was not the best bookkeeper—administrative change was needed—some claims were vindictive, one alleging that she had mothered children out of wedlock. Although Barton was ultimately cleared of the charges, in 1904 she resigned. The agency's headquarters were moved to Washington, DC, although the house at Glen Echo would forever keep the red stained-glass crosses that beckon from the upper-story windows, the Swiss insignia of neutrality letting visitors know that they are welcome.

Barton, age 83 at this point, just kept going, a year later establishing the National First Aid Association of America, offering classes in basic medical assistance to mill, factory, and railroad workers. At first, the Red Cross snubbed the idea, then offered classes of its own, and the association disbanded in support of that effort. In her final years, Barton wrote *The Story of My Childhood,* the first of a planned series of autobiographies, never written. She now had time for drawing, needlepoint, and rocking in her wicker chair on the back porch overlooking the Potomac.

Barton died of pneumonia at the age of 90 on April 12, 1912. She left her house to Hubbell, who managed it briefly before losing it to a woman who claimed Barton willed it to her during a séance. Hubbell eventually got the property back and willed it to his nieces, but not before some of the furnishings were sold. The Franks sisters, who bought the house from the Hubbells in 1942, repurchased some of it. Instrumental in preserving the house with other fans of the late humanitarian, they formed the Friends of Clara Barton, Inc., helping get the place designated as a national historic landmark before it eventually became a national historic site and unit of the National Park System.

WITH MONEY ALWAYS A STRUGGLE, SHE SUPPORTED HERSELF BY LECTURING ABOUT HER WAR EXPERIENCES, USING THE PODIUM TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

In the early 1900s, the cultural retreat had been turned into an amusement park; a photo in the web exhibit shows the house with a roller coaster around it, an attempt to drive Barton and her house off the land. It didn't work, of course, but Robinson says that had the Franks casually sold the property, it would likely be part of what is today Glen Echo Park with the house long gone. That would have been a sad fate for a place that "symbolizes everything she was able to accomplish," Robinson says.

ABOVE LEFT: ***Detail from Barton's silk bodice.*** ABOVE CENTER: ***Photographed probably in the early 1870s.*** ABOVE RIGHT: ***Detail from Barton's boar-bristle hat brush.*** RIGHT: ***Her Standard Visible Writer, No. 5, manufactured by the Chicago Oliver Typewriter Co. in the early 1900s.***

BY JOE FLANAGAN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JET LOWE

HARDSCRABBLE

DREAM

ranching the desert on the rim of the grand canyon

Brigham Young's exhortation to his people—to migrate south from the Salt Lake Basin—now seems more like prophecy than appeal. The Mormons, with characteristic efficiency and cohesiveness, thrived in agricultural communities throughout the Southwest. This is how they found themselves on the Arizona Strip, the rugged, arid, and unforgiving northwest corner of a state made up of red rock canyons, sagebrush, and wide open space.

CELEBRATING A DECADE **HALS** Historic American Landscapes Survey

LEFT: ***Tassi Ranch, on the remote Arizona Strip.***

ALL PHOTOS JET LOWE/NPS/HALS

THE REGION HAD LARGE EXPANSES OF GRASSLAND BUT FEW SOURCES OF WATER. Determined ranchers were able to make a go of it, raising cattle and sheep, but the big Mormon farming communities, dependent on ambitious irrigation projects, were ultimately not able to get a lasting hold. It is the iconic American West—sagebrush and desert—beautiful but seemingly not a place where thousands of cattle could survive. Nonetheless, livestock became big business. When the Mormons left, others came, cattle barons and independents, hard and highly adaptive people whose temperament, one suspects, fed on the stark majesty of the place and the challenging nature of the land. The isolated ranches on the Strip became extremely self-sufficient.

In the far reaches of the Arizona desert, on a gentle slope amid the basin-and-range topography, there is a rare site that recalls this heritage: the remains of Tassi Ranch, which operated in these austere environs for eight decades. The Historic American Landscapes Survey of the National Park

ABOVE: ***Panorama of cottonwood trees and the dry-laid stone ranch house.***

Service is in the midst of documenting the ranch and several others located in what is now Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, one of the first landscape surveys to employ laser scanning, says project manager Chris Stevens. While lasers are commonly used to record buildings, landscapes tend to be a challenge because brush is often an obstacle to attempts to scan the land's contours.

Tassi Ranch is being documented as part of an inventory of the monument's cultural landscapes. Among the products of the documentation is a comprehensive history, which, with photographs and drawings, will become part of the HALS collection at the Library of Congress. Tassi, according to a park cultural landscape inventory, "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a rare surviving vernacular ranch site," its significance tied to its association with the development of cattle ranching on the Strip.

THE NAME HAS MURKY ORIGINS, PERHAPS ASSOCIATED WITH A NATIVE AMERICAN woman who once lived here, but it is not certain. Today, a series of low, stone structures occupy a grove of mature cottonwoods beside a seasonal stream bed known as Pigeon Wash. There is a house, a barn, and a corral. People lived and ranched here as recently as the late '90s. The National Park Service, after weighing the options, chose to preserve the cultural remains intact. What distinguishes Tassi amidst the endless miles of arid wilderness is the presence of water. There are several natural springs—a fact long known by Native Americans—frequented by Mormon wagon trains and others. The first sign of an attempt to settle this area was noted in 1917, when a passerby delivering supplies to survey teams saw a stone house, a pasture, and an alfalfa patch. This was likely evidence of one Ed Thomas, whose story is now lost to history. But others took up sporadic residence at the springs, including Sid and Tyne Hecklethorne, who operated a still during Prohibition, sending their sour mash whiskey off to Las Vegas for distribution. Cattleman Ed Yates, who arrived in 1929, made the first extensive alterations to the landscape. Yates, who occupied the ranch for nearly 40 years, is responsible for much of the site's character. By the time he arrived, the era of the cattle baron had come and gone, but the independents were still making their mark.

WHEN THE MORMONS LEFT, OTHERS CAME, CATTLE BARONS AND INDEPENDENTS, HARD AND HIGHLY ADAPTIVE PEOPLE WHOSE TEMPERAMENT, ONE SUSPECTS, FED ON THE STARK MAJESTY OF THE PLACE AND THE CHALLENGING NATURE OF THE LAND.

AFTER THE MORMONS' DEPARTURE—HASTENED BY OVERGRAZED GRASSLANDS AND declining profits—cattle barons stepped in vying for control of the water. Preston Nutter, a Utah mogul, eventually won out. By the turn of the century, he was grazing some 25,000 cattle on the Strip.

The vast acreage was federal land, open to grazing. The early 20th century saw over 100,000 head of cattle and over a quarter million sheep. As ranchers fought over the dwindling resources, it was clear something had to be done. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 divided the land into districts with permits limiting the number of range animals.

Nutter died in 1936, and his control over the Strip dissolved not long after Yates arrived. Yates built a house, likely with the stones from Ed Thomas' original structure, and planted cottonwoods for shade and shelter from the wind; in summer, temperatures can hit 120 degrees, with winds up to 25 miles an hour in winter and spring.

He also built spring boxes to collect runoff and protect it from contamination, and created holding ponds and irrigation ditches to water

IT IS THE ICONIC AMERICAN WEST—SAGEBRUSH AND DESERT—BEAUTIFUL BUT SEEMINGLY NOT A PLACE WHERE THOUSANDS OF CATTLE COULD SURVIVE.

fields a short distance from the house. Since building materials could not be trucked in, he used what he could find: logs, native stone, even discarded railroad ties.

The ingenious maximization of the springs is remarkable in its own right, but the very existence of the ranch hints at a larger significance. Paul Dolinsky, chief of the Historic American Landscapes Survey, calls the area "one of the most remote places in the lower 48." What prompted Yates and his wife to move here and stay for 40 years? It would have taken "practically a survivalist mentality," Dolinsky says. He adds that the desire to live in a hostile environment is perhaps more significant than the act of taming it. "It represents not just the struggle to survive, but to establish individualism," he says. "Tassi Ranch embodies the American idea of identity and, in a way, Manifest Destiny."

The all-transforming properties of water are powerfully evident. According to the HALS report, "The moisture from the spring heads and the dense, layered vegetation they support create a unique microclimate in the ranch core that is cooler by day and warmer by night than the surrounding desert." Stevens points at a map showing vegetation at the site—arrow weed and Goodding's willow near the water, cat's claw and mesquite in the dry areas. "This," he says, indicating the ranch core, "is like a large oasis. It's really lush here. You feel like you're on the East Coast . . . and then you walk out and it's the Mojave Desert all around you." His finger goes to the blank contours that surround the ranch. "It's like a lunar landscape out here."

Yates' elaborate irrigation took advantage of the gentle incline of the terrain. Gravity carried the water to modest subsistence crops. The slopes that rise up behind the property served as pastureland. The ravines or swales between the irrigated places simply remained filled with the in-

LEFT: *Corrals at Tassi Ranch.*

digenous vegetation that thrives in a dry environment. For the most part, this is sweeping open landscape with mountain ranges in the distance. Closer to the house and corral, however, one is enclosed in trees.

IT WAS PROBABLY THE REMOTENESS THAT FOSTERED THE TANGLED STORY OF THE LEGAL rights to the ranch. Perhaps the place didn't get many visitors from the federal government or was simply too obscure to register on any official agenda. "Even now," says Jeff Bradybaugh, superintendent of Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, "it's three hours to get there after we leave paved roads."

Ten years before Ed Yates arrived, Washington closed the area to homesteading, water, and mineral claims. The government was looking to dam the Colorado River, creating a huge reservoir to make settlement in the West more feasible. These efforts would ultimately result

AFTER THE MORMONS' DEPARTURE—HASTENED BY OVERGRAZED GRASSLANDS AND DECLINING PROFITS—CATTLE BARONS STEPPED IN VYING FOR CONTROL OF THE WATER.

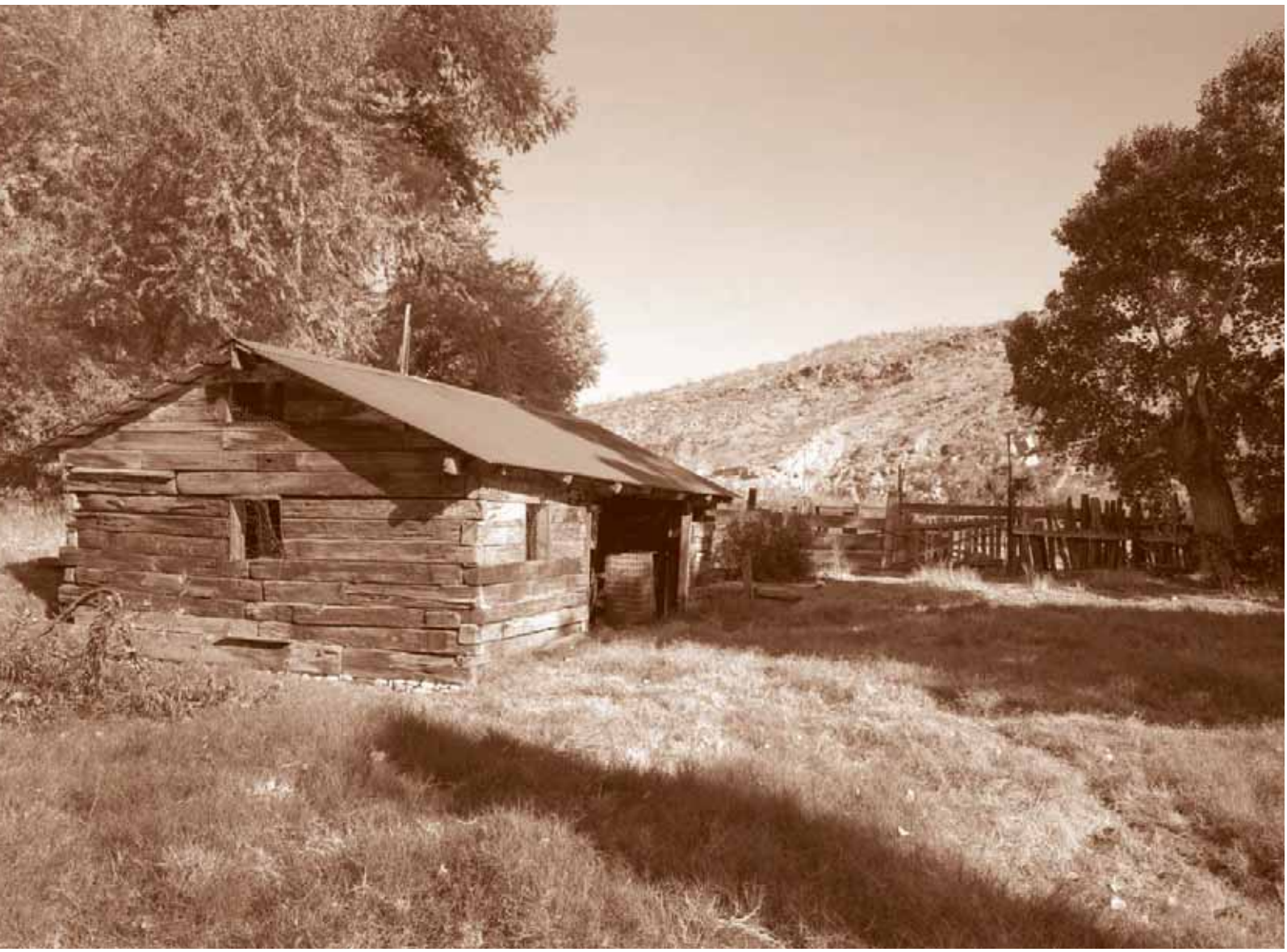
in Hoover Dam, but as a result of those early surveys, Tassi Ranch was designated off-limits to homesteading and other claims. In 1930, the area was being considered as part of a national monument and was withdrawn from any land claims under that criterion. The monument was never established but Boulder Canyon Recreation Area was, in 1936 (becoming Lake Mead National Recreation Area in 1964).

Meanwhile, Yates continued along with his ranching. It is not known if he was aware of these developments. In 1936, he approached the state for water rights to Tassi Springs. Whether the state was confused about the location of his ranch or whether it was an act of defiance against the federal government, Arizona granted him the rights. Says Bradybaugh, "It's such an isolated area I don't know that [the government] was paying that much attention, especially back in that era. There wasn't that much follow-up by federal and state agencies on where people were setting up their homesteads or filing water claims." There was probably, he says, a feeling that so far out in the desert one could do what one pleased. "There seemed to be no interest in dealing with the government," he says.

In 1949, Yates made an agreement with the Bureau of Land Management in which he was given a grazing allotment. As now, the BLM controlled vast acreage in the region. The condition for the allotment was control over a source of water, which Yates had, albeit illegally. Access to BLM land gave him plenty of space to range his cattle and the allotment legitimized his presence. It would be decades before anyone checked the records. It is not known how Yates got his cattle to market, though Bradybaugh surmises he took them to St. Thomas, just across the border in Nevada. The town was flooded when the Hoover Dam was built and is now only visible when the water is low.

Yates moved out in 1963 and sold his water rights and grazing allotment to Eldon Smith, who not only defaulted on payments but regularly vio-

RIGHT: *Inside the ranch house, with a pass-through to a storehouse on the left of the fireplace.*



lated terms of the BLM agreement. By the early '70s, Smith was out and Yates was back. He was 87 now, living with his daughter and son-in-law. A visitor during the period reported that the irrigation system was still working well, supporting 20 acres of pasture and a garden with corn, tomatoes, chard, and watermelon. Yates left again in 1972, this time for good, selling the land to Dennis Whitmore. Whitmore and his brother, who had 100 head of cattle, built an airstrip to facilitate access.

In 1977, officials at Lake Mead were considering designating certain areas as wilderness. This brought the ownership situation under scrutiny. An investigation determined that Yates had been encroaching on federal land, though the question of whether he was illegally granted water rights was not addressed. The federal government told the Whitmores that they could no longer live on or cultivate the land. They could continue grazing under the BLM allotments, but otherwise, they had to move out.

ABOVE: ***Looking east with barn in foreground and corrals in the distance.***

Thus began what the HALS report calls "a protracted back and forth" between the Whitmores and the National Park Service. The matter eventually went to federal court, where it was discovered that the water rights were not valid. Over a years-long process, the Whitmores finally left. In the 1990s, NPS staff began looking at the site's ecological and cultural significance to formulate a management strategy.

After the Whitmores moved out, breaches in the irrigation system altered the flow of water, hence the current growth pattern of vegetation with dense, impenetrable thickets. The ranch house and spring boxes (both made of stone) were damaged by water and vegetation, but those threats have been removed and the structures stabilized. Grand Canyon-Parashant was designated a national monument in 2000. It

ABOVE: *Looking west toward an irrigation ditch and a now-dry holding pond.*

comprises over one million acres—over 800,000 under BLM management and more than 208,000 managed by the National Park Service. The monument is overseen jointly.

The land may be barren but it is culturally rich. Says Bradybaugh, "Across this huge million acres there are a lot of settlement-era remains, and that's just the historic sites." There is also a long prehistoric record. "The whole place is one big archeological site," he says. The ranching legacy is extensive, the Yates story one of many. Since the monument is relatively new, the effort to understand all it contains is ongoing. Aside from ranching, there was mining too. "Right now we're trying to get the historic sites documented," Bradybaugh says, "starting with those in the best condition."

The effort brought the HALS team to Grand Canyon-Parashant last spring for another project. East of Lake Mead, the Colorado River makes a sweeping turn southward, and into this bend a plateau extends like a long peninsula into the Grand Canyon. The Shivwits Plateau, as it is known, is the location of the Waring Ranch, which operated from 1925 to the early 1960s. J. D. Waring was not the first to ranch there—

WHAT PROMPTED YATES AND HIS WIFE TO MOVE HERE AND STAY FOR 40 YEARS? IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN "PRACTICALLY A SURVIVALIST MENTALITY," DOLINSKY SAYS.

Mormons began grazing livestock in the area in the 1860s and Preston Nutter had the region largely under his control in the late 19th century. Waring arrived in 1916, secured a homestead, and then proceeded to buy up as much property as he could. In time, he owned a large portion of the Kelly Point Peninsula. Waring established his headquarters at a place called Horse Valley, now listed in the National Register of Historic Places, important as a highly intact remnant of a late frontier cattle ranch. The operation extended over 50,000 acres on the Kelly Point Peninsula and the Shivwits Plateau.

HALS researchers arrived in June to document a landscape that, like Tassi Ranch, had been shaped to meet the unique circumstances of ranching on the Strip. According to a National Park Service report, "The placement of the cabins, corrals, fence lines, and water tanks reflects the functional purpose of each area of the ranch and the ingenuity and resourcefulness required for building in such isolation." The fenced pastures and their associated fixtures reflect the profound influence of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, particularly in their juxtaposition with remnants of the bygone days of free-ranging livestock.

A monument history calls it "a rural historic landscape"—primarily open country with scattered groves of ponderosa pine and occasional pinyon-juniper woodland. These sources, along with discarded railroad ties, were used to build cabins, corrals, and fence posts. Kerosene was used for light and fuel; electricity never reached the ranch.

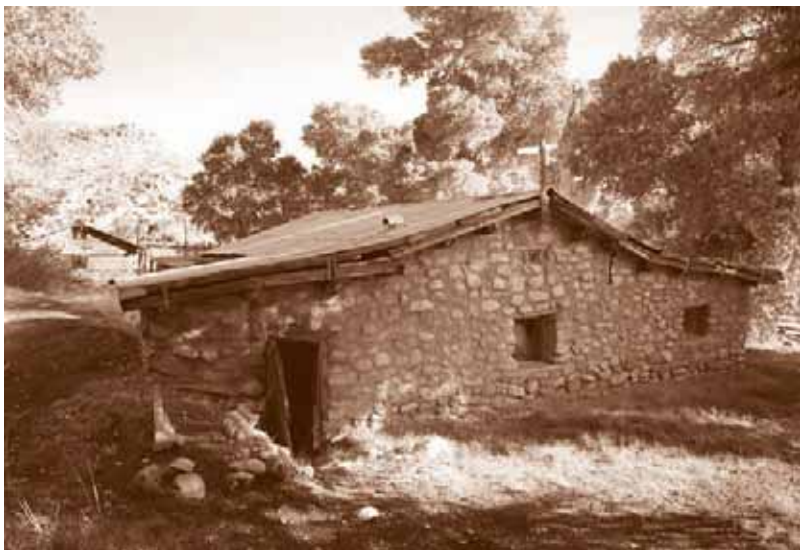
TASSI AND WARING ARE RARE EXAMPLES OF A CULTURE UNTO ITSELF, ON THE FRINGE OF MAINSTREAM RANCHING FAR FROM THE CENTER OF THE BEEF INDUSTRY.

HALS documented the six "line camps" that made up Waring's holdings. These were built around reliable water sources and today consist generally of collapsed cabins, old corrals, and scattered debris. "They would march the herd across the peninsula according to water supply," says Stevens, moving from camp to camp. Reservoirs were dug out of the ground near dry washes so that on the rare occasion of a rainstorm, the water would collect.

Cattle were driven a long distance to the railhead at Modena, Utah. "We've done oral histories of people who are now in their 80s, sitting on the backs of pickups listening to their stories," says Bradybaugh. "In the 1940s and '50s they were still doing these long cattle drives. This is hundreds of miles, a month-long process."

Tassi and Waring are rare examples of a culture unto itself, on the fringe of mainstream ranching far from the center of the beef industry. "People had to work extremely hard just to make it out there," Bradybaugh says. What they accomplished took stamina and ingenuity, adds Dolinsky — "plumbing the water supply to meet their needs, taking this hostile environment and making it as kind as it could be." In a way the place is about personal freedom and the greatness of the landscape. "It bespeaks the individuality of the American spirit," Dolinsky says.

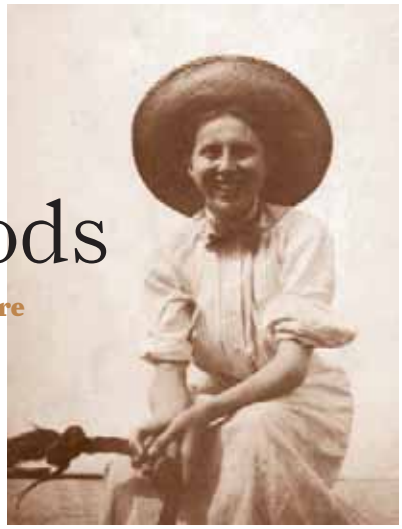
contact points **web** *Historic American Landscapes Survey* www.nps.gov/hdp/hals/index.htm *Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument* www.nps.gov/para/



ABOVE: *Tassi ranch house and additions.* LEFT: *The landscape from on high.*

Heart of the Woods

Caroline Dormon, Creating a Safe Haven for Nature



THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF NATURAL wonders in Louisiana, from its breezy bayous to its fragile wetlands, but one of its truly special spots is Briarwood, also known as the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve. And to know Briarwood is to know Caroline Dormon, founder of Louisiana's Kisatchie National Forest, one of the state's most influential conservationists and among the first women employed in forestry in America. The "almost-virgin forest with magnificent trees towering a hundred feet tall" is where she vacationed as a child and later spent most of her life, overseeing its care in the name of wilderness preservation.

ABOVE: *Caroline Dormon in her younger years.*
RIGHT: *Entering Briarwood from State Route 9.*

by meghan hogan **photographs by james rosenthal** **historic american landscapes survey**

ALL PHOTOS: JAMES ROSENTHAL NPS/HALS EXCEPT AS NOTED. LEFT NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA, WATSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY; CAMMIE G. HENRY RESEARCH CENTER (CAROLINE DORMON COLLECTION, D14)

BRIARWOOD IS THE FIRST NATURALISTIC SITE RECORDED BY THE HISTORIC AMERICAN Landscapes Survey, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year with almost 200 projects completed. The site is central to the story of Natchitoches, which as the state's oldest permanent settlement is steeped in Louisiana history. Yet, as a "designed wilderness," it might seem an oxymoron to some. "It really raises the question of how you interpret conservation," says HALS chief Paul Dolinsky. Though the land was there long before she was, it's what Dormon did with it that made it what it is today. "A walk through her woods, filled with native southern plants, is a special experience," says Nancy Morgan, former director of the Natchitoches-based Cane River Creole National Heritage Area, who was instrumental in getting focus on the site. "She somehow managed to create an environment that is completely natural, as strange as that sounds." Amidst 120 acres of old-growth hardwood and pine, Dormon scattered over 50 years of plantings, some local to Louisiana and the southeastern states, and others from across the globe. Today, there are approximately 900 species in the Briarwood plant database, not including exotic ones "too numerous to list," says Jessie Johnson, who has managed the site with her husband, Richard, since Dormon's death in 1971. "She used her forest as a canvas," Johnson says, crediting its virgin appearance to Dormon's skills as a landscape designer and artist. "She took into consideration the requirements of each plant and its preferred habitat."

Amidst 120 acres of old-growth hardwood and pine, Dormon scattered over 50 years of plantings, some local to Louisiana and the southeastern states, and others from across the globe.

CARING FOR SUCH A PLACE SINGLE-HANDED MIGHT SEEM DAUNTING even to the most seasoned professional, but to Dormon it was a joyous adventure. Born at Briarwood, her family's summer home, in July 1888, she was the sixth child of somewhat unconventional parents who emphasized the importance of education and an appreciation for nature above material pursuits. Her lifelong love affair with the outdoors began on fishing trips and nature expeditions with her father, a lawyer. Her green thumb was courtesy of her mother, a novelist, who gave each child a small garden plot. Their childhoods were spent bird watching, wildflower picking, and playing in the front-yard tree house of their home in Arcadia where they lived most of the year. After each Christmas, they counted the days to going "down the country" for six weeks at Briarwood, a yearly event. It was an idyllic period for Dormon.

In 1904, she went away to Judson College in Marion, Alabama, graduating in 1907 with a fine arts degree in literature and art, only to have her mother die the same year, and her father two years later. And just three months after his death, the Arcadia house burned to the ground.

Dormon, "Miss Carrie" to both her friends and later her students, spent the next couple of years as a high school teacher in Lake Arthur, Louisiana, vacationing every summer at Briarwood until 1917, when, declining her brother's invitation to join him in Alabama, moved there with her older sister, Virginia, to live permanently.

Still in her 20s, she didn't have any grand plans to promote conservation until she noticed the forests of magnificent longleaf pines—not unlike the ones at her beloved Briarwood—along her 20-mile daily drive to Kisatchie School, her new employer. "I was in heaven," she wrote later. The forests were known to few except local loggers, who were just as fond as she was. She took a first step towards conservation by attending the Southern Forestry Congress in 1920. From there she chaired the forestry division of the Louisiana Federation of Women's Clubs, and just months after that, was appointed to the Louisiana Forestry Association's legislative committee.

As a forestry chairman, her success in organizing events such as a tree-planting competition for the Boys Reforestation Clubs of Louisiana was soon noticed by state officials and in 1921 the Louisiana Forestry

LEFT: *A stream in the Cypress Bog.* **ABOVE:** *Dormon's house.*

Division hired her as one of the country's first female employees—for a forestry awareness job with no official description.

She thus turned her teaching skills to forestry education, visiting schools across the state, determined to plant the seeds of conservation in young minds. In 1923, she resigned from the position over disagreements with a supervisor, but was back in 1927 when she kickstarted projects such as a forestry essay contest and an Arbor Day booklet. Immensely popular with educators, "she was deluged with invitations to speak to local and state groups," writes Fran Holman in "*The Gift of the Wild Things*": *The Life Of Caroline Dormon*.

YET HER TEACHING NEVER DISTRACTED HER FROM SAVING KISATCHIE. ALWAYS AN ARTIST, a sketch shows her hunched over her desk at Briarwood, where every Sunday she wrote to lumber companies asking to kindly sell their tracts to the government. "What more splendid monument could you leave to do honor to your name?" she asked as she described plans for a park. She enlisted her brother, a lawyer, to draft legislation allowing Louisiana to purchase the land—which took almost 10 years to pass—but in 1929 the state started buying tracts and on June 10, 1930, Kisatchie National Forest was established. Her "singular dream" realized, she retired from her job with the state, living on private projects coupled with activities like running a girls camp and selling canned vegetables.

Dormon spent much of the next several years doing landscape design for Louisiana's Board of Public Welfare and the Department of Transportation and Development. Her work on projects like the grounds of the Midstate Charity Hospital and along stretches of Louisiana highway favored native plantings such as dogwoods, wild azaleas, and crabapples, blended with the shrubs and trees already on site. The formal elements of traditional landscaping—such as the trimming of plants into decorative shapes and the planting of flowerbeds— she considered "horrors." She was a consultant for Hodges Gardens State Park, and advised on plant selection for Longue Vue House and Gardens, the New Orleans estate of her good friend Edith Stern, the daughter of Sears founder Julius Rosenwald. Yet plants were not her only passion. She was deeply interested in American history, particularly that of the Indians and early settlers, again owing to her father, who regaled her with stories as a child. Her nuanced theories on conquistador Hernando de Soto earned her a spot on a presidential commission established in 1935 to trace his route. Appointed by President Franklin Roosevelt, she was the only woman of the seven-member group. She canvassed the state in search of clues left by the explorer, often with her sister as chauffeur.

BUT SHE ALWAYS CAME BACK TO BRIARWOOD TO RE-CHARGE. IT WAS, AS THE HALS HISTORY notes, "her laboratory and muse." One of her favorite things to do was visit "Grandpappy"—a 106-foot-tall longleaf pine, and relax against its expansive trunk. Around 300 years old today, it remains one of the property's main attractions for the 2,000 or so visitors each year. Other popular sites are the Log House, built in 1950 as Dormon's residence and now a museum, Wings Rest Pond, and, perhaps one of the most magical spots she cultivated, the Bay Garden, home to over 100 different plants. It is especially abundant with the vivacious Louisiana iris—one of Dormon's favorite flowers, although Johnson stresses that she didn't have just one. "We often say whichever plant Miss Dormon was standing by was her favorite." As a self-proclaimed "irisiac," she was particularly attracted to its rainbow palette and, as a natural hybrid produced from four species found only in southern Louisiana, its mysterious genetics. "Here was this unique iris growing in our

As a self-proclaimed "irisiac" she was particularly attracted to its rainbow palette and, as a natural hybrid produced from four species found only in southern Louisiana, its mysterious genetics.

ABOVE: *Briarwood's Frog Pond, its bank alive with irises.* **RIGHT:** *The Rest Pond reflecting Grandpappy, Dormon's beloved longleaf pine.*

state for thousands of years and no other place in the world, and no one knew about them except local people quietly planting them in their yards," Johnson says. Dormon never even heard of the plant until 1920, when she happened to spot a field of them on a drive. From that one sighting, it didn't take long to fall in love. "No wild flower adventure can ever quite match my excitement on seeing them for the first time," she later said.

Determined to learn as much as she could about the little-known plant, over the next several years she befriended other aficionados including Dr. John Small, curator of the New York Botanical Gardens, and Mary Swords DeBaillon, who owned the world's largest collection of Louisiana irises. With Briarwood as her testing ground, she planted and studied many varieties. She soon found the species needed lots of food and water, preferring humus-rich soil coupled with plenty of sunshine. With those prerequisites, Briarwood's shady bogs wouldn't seem the ideal location for iris growing, but visitors were surprised at how they well did. She also had friends plant them in their gardens to gauge their growth in different soil and weather conditions. She diligently recorded every variation.

BY THE EARLY 1930S, DORMON WAS CONSIDERED AN IRIS EXPERT. AFTER THE DE SOTO Commission released its report in 1939, she devoted more time to the pursuit, through the late 1940s. By that time, Dormon—then in her 50s and never in the best of health due to a weak heart—had largely retired from public life to devote herself wholeheartedly to her plants. It was the "peak of scientific activity" for Briarwood, states the HALS history.

She took her love of the Louisiana iris beyond mere observation, hybridizing to create her own varieties. Yet she never considered herself more than an amateur. "Most of mine go over the fence, as far as I can throw them!" she once wrote in an article for *Home Gardening*. Despite her modesty, she earned awards from the American Iris Society for several of her creations such as Violet Ray, a vibrant purple with cream-colored rays extending out from the center, and Saucy Minx, a "brilliant rose-red" with ruffled petals. Johnson notes that Dormon's Wheelhorse iris—a magenta flower with a sunburst of yellow—is a grandparent still used by hybridizers. Those varieties and many more continue to bloom in the Bay Garden as a carpet of reds, yellows, golds, lavenders, bi-colors, all shades of blue, and purples "so deep they're black in the bud stage," Johnson says. Dormon sketched and painted many of the species at Briarwood as well as landscapes and scenes of nature and the South. She did illustrations for various horticultural publications, and her work was exhibited by several museums. When she wasn't sketching, she was writing. She corresponded with fellow flower lovers around the world, always clear that she did "not have a 'garden'—just wild woods, with an unusual plant here and there among the briars!"

For the benefit of growers and because she needed the money, she also published her extensive botany notes and observations. *Flowers Native to the Deep South* and *Natives Preferred* were released in the 1950s and '60s, along with *Bird Talk,* which reflected her fascination with birds and is infused with Rachel Carson's warnings against the deadly use of DDT, which would kill them. "Her passion and inspiration encouraged others to love and grow native plants in their landscapes," says Jenny Rose Carey, director of the Ambler Arboretum at Pennsylvania's Temple University, pointing out that at the time, "the trend in horticulture was the exotic plant from a faraway country."

DORMON SAID HER LIFE MUST SEEM "VERY QUIET AND UNEVENTFUL TO OTHERS" BUT for such a life she received a lot of notice, including awards from the Garden Club of America and the American Horticultural Society as well as her alma mater. Louisiana State University granted her an honorary Doctor of Science degree, and a lodge at Chicot State Park is named after her. These honors were particularly significant considering that she was a woman. "It is impossible to quantify the often subtle influence that women like Caroline had on changing the status quo," Carey says.

She passed away in 1971, but always protective of Briarwood—her sister once crashed into a pine and hid the damage to the tree instead of the car—not before ensuring that it would be safe. In the months before her death, she bequeathed the property to the Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, Inc., a group of 20 volunteer board members, establishing Briarwood as "a learning laboratory for students, botanists, horticulturists, and serious individuals wanting to learn more of the natural world." As sole caretakers she designated Richard Johnson—who as a child impressed Dormon by climbing an oak to collect mistletoe for her—and his wife Jessie. As the HALS history notes, every decision they've made since has been acted on only after asking, "What would Caroline do?" The trails have been slightly widened for maintenance, and of course storms always have an impact, but Briarwood remains pretty much the same as in Dormon's day, which is just as it should be. "She always said that if you did your work correctly, no one would be able to tell you had been there," Johnson says.

"She used her forest as a canvas," Johnson says, crediting its virgin appearance to Dormon's skills as a landscape designer and artist.

contact points ***web*** *Briarwood www.cp-tel.net/dormon/ HALS Collection at the Library of Congress http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/*

LEFT: *Briarwood's Writer's Cabin.*

ARTI FACT

Eco Demo

GREEN BUILDING COULD BE CALLED A TREND OF THE MOMENT, but it had its moment at mid-century, too. Florida's Revere Quality Institute House, recently listed in the National Register of Historic Places, presaged today's eco-minded construction by over 50 years. Designed in 1948 by Ralph Twitchell and Paul Rudolph, the house was one of eight commissioned by the Revere Quality Institute and *Architectural Forum* to promote "more cost effective and livable" housing stock. **TWITCHELL ESTABLISHED THE SARASOTA SCHOOL,** an architectural style that flourished at mid-century in the city of the same name. Taking cues from both the Bauhaus and regional forms, the style fused elements such as flat roofs, minimal ornament, raised floors, and verandas with climate-friendly construction resistant to the Sunshine State's humidity, termites, and hurricanes. **BUILT USING LAMOLITHIC CONCRETE TECHNOLOGY,** a construction system that employs reusable steel forms, the house is kept cool in the summer by six-inch-thick walls, jalousie glass windows, and overhanging eaves, while the convex hearth of the copper fireplace promotes efficient warming in winter. An enclosed courtyard, complete with grass carpet, brings the outdoors in, and a flue for the fireplace doubles ingeniously as the kitchen stove vent. Both hurricane-proof and fireproof, it is "a one-of-a-kind design . . . comfortable and visually distinctive," notes the National Register nomination. **PLANNED AS A DEMONSTRATION HOUSE,** it was an international sensation, drawing 16,000 visitors. Eventually, it was sold to Twitchell's future wife, Roberta Healey Finney, and the architect himself moved in a year later, where he lived until his death. A 2007 restoration returned the 1,000-square-foot structure, now a guesthouse for a two-story structure next to it, to its original appearance, right down to the Tennessee White and Georgia Red terrazzo flooring. "We went back to the same quarry to get the same stone," says construction superintendent Derek Chipman. "The house is really a piece of art."

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